

Department of Human Services

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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, January 4, 2007

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Granholm Signs Liquor Laws

MIRS, Wednesday, January 3, 2007

Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** recently signed a bill that will allow Kent County to continue levying a hotel and motel liquor tax.

Granholm signed **HB 5545**, which was introduced by Rep. Dave **HILDENBRAND** (R-Lowell). **HB 5545** simply allows communities with more than 750,000 residents, rather than 600,000 residents, to levy certain local hotel and liquor taxes to pay for convention facilities.

Increasing the size of the county simply allows Kent County to continue collecting the tax.

Granholm also signed a Sen. Bill **HARDIMAN** (R-Kentwood) bill (**SB 1512**) that allows certain confidential Department of Human Services (DHS) and Child Protective Services (CPS) records to be shared with a local Friend of the Court.

The records that can be released would only be released if they were needed to determine custody or visitation issues, and with a child protective agency prosecuting a disciplinary action against an employee.

Granholm also signed **SB 1254**, which was also sponsored by Hardiman and requires the DHS to file annual reports with the Legislature on its record of handling child abuse cases.

The Governor also signed the following bills:

HB 4918, introduced by Rep. Chris **WARD** (R-Brighton), revises the State Officers Compensation Commission (SOCC) so that it conforms with a recent change in the state constitution that prohibits any pay increases from going into effect unless both the House and Senate affirmatively votes to approve them.

HB 4919, introduced by Rep. Mary **WATERS** (D-Detroit), revises the State Officers Compensation Commission (SOCC) statute so that it conforms with a recent change in the state constitution, which added the attorney general and the secretary of state to this list.

HB 4420, introduced by Rep. Fulton **SHEEN** (R-Plainwell), revises a law that requires the state to investigate cases of severe physical injury to a child that required medical treatment, hospitalization or seriously impairs the child's health or physical well being.

HB 4481, introduced by Rep. Ed **GAFFNEY** (R-Grosse Pointe Farms), establishes procedures for getting absentee ballots to members of the armed forces and other voters who are overseas.

HB 4735, introduced by Rep. Kevin **GREEN** (R-Wyoming) allows for supplemental increase in pension benefits for state police retirees who participated and accrued leave time in the "bank time hours" program operating between Dec. 22, 1957, and July 13, 1963.

HB 5374, introduced by Rep. William **VAN REGENMORTER** (R-Georgetown Twp.), adds one judge in the 6th circuit (Oakland County), one in the 7th circuit (Genesee County), one in the 16th (Macomb County), one in the 17th (Kent County) one in the 49th circuit (Mecosta and Osceola counties) and one in the 55th circuit (Clare and Gladwin Counties).

HB 5529, introduced by Rep. Rick **JONES** (R-Grand Ledge), lets local governments set the "per diem" for members of the administrative boards of joint fire or police agencies created by two or more local governments.

HB 5661, introduced by Rep. Mike **NOFS** (R-Battle Creek), allows car insurance companies to give drivers who are older than 50 years old a discount if they complete a certified accident prevention education driver safety course.

SB 1409, introduced by Sen. Liz **BRATER** (D-Ann Arbor), deals with delinquent property tax foreclosure actions on subsurface oil and gas rights that previously had been severed from the above-ground property.

SB 1427, introduced by Sen. Wayne **KUIPERS** (R-Holland), says that a personal curriculum approved for a pupil would have to incorporate as much of the subject area content expectations for the credits required under new high school graduation requirements as is practicable for the pupil.

SB 1101, introduced by Sen. Bob **EMERSON** (D-Flint), eliminates a six-mill state education tax that requires the state to collect the tax if the local government chooses not to.

SB 1208, introduced by Sen. Mickey **SWITALSKI** (D-Roseville), postpones a requirement that states no less than 45 percent of lottery ticket sale revenue be paid out in prizes until 2012.

HB 5717, introduced by Rep. Lee **GONZALES** (D-Flint), earmarks certain fees on tax-reverted land to establish a state fund to pay for the administration of the tax-reverted land process.

HB 6315, introduced by Rep. David **FARHAT** (R-Fruitport), says a cemetery owner has to buy an American flag and flag holder for the grave of a veteran if a local affiliate of a veterans organization requests it.

SB 1032, introduced by Sen. Alan **SANBORN** (R-Richmond), includes municipal ordinance violations in the law that gives courts the authority to place those convicted of misdemeanors on probation.

SB 0662, introduced by Sanborn, requires the state to solicit competitive bids for all procurement contracts, rather than requiring competitive bids when they are deemed to be "in the state's best interests," as under current law, unless the purchases are made using policies or procedures to ensure that purchases are made at "fair and reasonable" prices.

SB 1428, introduced by Sen. Alan **CROPSEY** (R-DeWitt), allows defendants required to attend "drug treatment courts" to attend the programs offered in jurisdictions other than where they were convicted, and make mandatory what had been certain

content guidelines for drug treatment courts.

SB 1327, introduced by Kuipers, sets aside procedures for when a teacher requests that certain endorsements on his or her teaching certificate be nullified.

SB 1017, introduced by Sen. Ron **JELINEK** (R-Three Oaks), lets a public school pension system member to name a second spouse as his or her beneficiary if a first spouse predeceases him or her, and allow naming a spouse as beneficiary if the marriage occurs after the start of the pension.

SB 0926, introduced by Sen. Nancy **CASSIS** (R-Novi), extends certain business tool and equipment property tax breaks to leased tools and equipment.

SB 0891, introduced by Hardiman, clarifies the duties, authorities and responsibilities of the Department of Treasury, the Department of Human Services and other state departments additional regarding the collection of delinquent child support and other payments.

SB 0775, introduced by Sen. Bev **HAMMERSTROM** (R-Temperance), eliminates statutory provisions specifying which persons serve on the board that oversees legislative pensions, and instead allow the board to create its own bylaws specifying who serves on the board, and to revise other details of the legislative retirement system.

SB 0059, introduced by Sen. Deb **CHERRY** (D-Burton), lets mayors perform marriages anywhere in the county containing the city that they are mayor of.

SB 0065, introduced by Jelinek, lets local governments be exempt from local property taxes for up to two years properties purchased and improved by nonprofit housing development associations that they intend to transfer or lease to low-income families.

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Article published Jan 4, 2007

Law fumes over veto by Granholm

BY LARRY RUEHLEN
STAFF WRITER

Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed the bill state Rep. David Law (R-Commerce) hoped would make children safer.

"The governor has disregarded the recommendations from experts and is further putting the lives of our children at risk," Law said. "Politics, once again, took a front seat in the governor's agenda."

Law, a former assistant prosecutor for Oakland County, sponsored House Bill 6440 to shift oversight of the office of the Children's Ombudsman from the Department of Management and Budget to the Legislative Council.

The office of the Children's Ombudsman investigates possible wrongdoing in the Department of Human Services. The office came under scrutiny after the death of Ricky Holland. The boy was 7 when his adoptive mother Lisa Holland killed him with a hammer last June. A subsequent investigation revealed several mistakes in the way the state's Department of Human Services handled the case.

Currently, the governor appoints the Children's Ombudsman -- her veto ensures she will retain that power.

"The main reason for my disapproval is that under the bill, the Children's Ombudsman would be appointed by, answer to, and be subject to removal by state legislators appointed via partisan process," Granholm said in a memo to legislators.

Since the legislative session is over, lawmakers have no chance to override the veto. The bill could, however, be introduced in the new legislative session.



Checking on sex offenders just got a little easier

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, January 04, 2007

By Bryn Mickle

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State police will now send e-mails alerting people when a sex offender moves into the neighborhood.

The free service is the state's latest effort to make its online sex offender registry more user-friendly.

With nearly 19,500 registered sex offenders on a computer list that changes daily, the new notification system means people will no longer have to search ZIP codes on their own.

Instead, computer users can get automatic updates for as many as six different ZIP codes.

"I like that idea," said Genesee County Sheriff Robert J. Pickell.

"People are entitled to know if a sex offender is living in their neighborhood, especially if they have children."

To access the list, go to www.mipsor.state.mi.us.

But don't assume your neighborhood is in the clear if you don't get any e-mails from the registry.

The state has estimated that as many as 34 percent of sex offenders don't adhere to rules for changing or verifying addresses.

- Bryn Mickle

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Child witness coached, attorney says

Thursday, January 04, 2007

By John Agar

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The attorney for a Grand Rapids music teacher accused of fondling students suggested a witness was coached by his mother after she heard about other allegations.

Attorney Fil Iorio, who has noted family relationships among several of the nine alleged victims, questioned the credibility of a 6-year-old boy who testified Wednesday that Ronald Taylor Jr. inappropriately touched him last year when he was in kindergarten.

Iorio said the boy was "merely repeating things that he heard on the playground from a friend of his ... and also his mother, in regard to the press and the correspondence from the school. These are things that have been planted in his mind."

Grand Rapids District Judge Jeanine LaVille noted inconsistencies on "some minor points," but found the young witness believable -- and said the issue of his credibility should be left to a jury.

She ordered Taylor, 38, bound over to Kent County Circuit Court on a charge of second-degree sexual assault, a 15-year felony.

"The witness ... did relate clearly that at some time during the last school year, at Buchanan School, the defendant did touch him in an area he called his 'private parts,'" the judge said.

Taylor remained in the Kent County Jail.

In the other eight similar cases against Taylor, which are being handled by another judge, testimony will continue at an undecided date.

Four of those boys have testified Taylor molested them, with four other children expected to take the stand.

Once that testimony is complete, District Judge Benjamin Logan will determine whether Taylor should stand trial on eight counts of second-degree sexual assault.

Kent County Assistant Prosecutor Kevin Bramble said additional charges could be filed based on testimony of the accusers, ages 5 to 10.

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Article published Jan 4, 2007

Sex offender's critics must be careful about throwing stones

A conversation has been going on about a volunteer firefighter who pleaded guilty to child molestation a few years back. Apparently, some people believe he should not be allowed to serve his community by saving lives and property because of this.

I am saddened by the lack of forgiveness and the judgmental attitude of those speaking out against this man. I do not know him or any of his critics, but from what I gather, he seems to be making amends for what he did. I don't think any of us should stand in his way.

I get the distinct feeling that if we took a step back and tried to think about this in a less emotional light, we could see that it is not our job to judge him. We should be reaching out to him and trying to help him be a contributing citizen in the community, not treating him like an evil person to be cast aside.

Not only that, it seems highly unlikely in the event of a fire or accident, he would have time to molest children. There would be too many people around and too much going on for him to do putting out the fire or working in a rescue situation.

I, for one, would like to tell him that it's wonderful he's trying to be such a positive image and not to let all the negative remarks get him down. For those who are casting stones, let's hope you are without sin.

TRINA AVEDISIAN

Port Huron, Jan. 2

Thursday January 4, 2007

Here's what I did in 2006

By Dan Pepper
Allegan County News Staff Writer

Wednesday, January 3, 2007 11:16 AM EST

Child molestation charges

2006 was witness to what local police kept calling one of the worst cases of child sexual abuse they'd seen or heard of.

Multiple children were abused, mostly took place at some of their homes, and police and prosecutors said they found 80,000 pieces of child pornography. Some of it was within families, as well.

Melissa Maria Rupert, 27, of Clyde Township was the last person charged in the case. Rupert pleaded guilty to second-degree child abuse, a four-year felony, in October.

Her husband, James Lee Rupert, 27, was sentenced on charges of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, in September. His father, Ronald, 56, was sentenced to up to 50 years in prison in July.

Having to cover cases like this is the opposite of the one of the perks of this job.

The numbers of kids involved and the horror of the acts committed just kept increasing as more information about it came out as the cases went through the courts.

It was literally hard to believe that anything like this had happened, but talk to anyone in law enforcement or child protection and you'll hear that it does.

To sit in court and see these people, sometimes I'll admit to thinking, 'Yeah, that guy looks like there's something wrong with him,' but most of them look just like everyday people who you wouldn't look at more than anyone else on the street.

As to the children who were victims, who thankfully never had to testify in court because the prosecutors were successful in getting everyone to plead guilty, you can only hope that the people who are trying to help them can help them.

Plastic Payments

Some States Move to Debit Cards for Child Support

States are discovering that using prepaid debit cards is more convenient for consumers, and less costly for states.

By Mary Branham Dusenberry

States are increasingly migrating from paper to plastic when it comes to child support payments they disburse.

More than a dozen states have launched prepaid debit/credit cards for these payments, and 30 states have issued RFPs (Requests for Proposals) for the cards, according to Jonathan Weiner, president of Prepaid Media, which provides business-to-business, integrated media and information services to emerging industries. One of its focuses is the growing network branded prepaid and stored value card industry.

"The main premise is moving from a paper-based payment system to an electronic-based payment system," Weiner said.

States have found the use of credit cards for child support payments to be more convenient for customers and less costly to states.

"This is the biggest, most important issue for states today—how to reduce their costs as well as improve services," said T.

Jack Williams, senior vice president, strategic programs with Tier Technologies, which provides financial transaction processing for several states.

"Some people who receive child support don't have bank accounts," said Janece Rolfe, communications manager for the Texas Office of Attorney General, Division for Families and Children. "They're not able to use direct deposit, so they still get paper checks in the mail. There's a risk of it getting lost or stolen.

"The debit card," she said, "is more secure and saves tax dollars because we save 50 cents per disbursement."

Texas began converting child support payments that go through the state disbursement system from checks to debit cards in May and has rolled out the program throughout the state, Rolfe said.

Unlike many states, Texas allows the recipient to decide whether to move to the debit card and Rolfe said about 150,000 people are using it. Through educational outreach about the program,

This is the biggest, most important issue for states today—how to reduce their costs as well as improve services.

—T. Jack Williams,
Tier Technologies

however, about 12,000 more people moved from paper checks to direct deposit.

"We also saw that as a win because of our push to go electronic," Rolfe said. "We distribute about 1.5 million payments a month. About 70 percent are distributed electronically ... either debit card or direct deposit."

Michigan also is moving its paper checks to debit cards and direct deposit for child support payments.

"Mailing a paper check is expensive for the state. We have to prepare the check, put postage on it and send it through the mail," said Marilyn Stephen, director of the office of child support in the Michigan Department of Human Services.

She said direct deposit is the number one choice for the customer.

Electronic payments—either direct deposit or debit cards—get to the consumer quickly and easily, even in times of disaster. Stephen said the effects of Hurricane Katrina offered a lot of lessons for many divisions of state government.

Many people were left homeless and moved from the area with no way to forward child support payments. "My colleague in Louisiana would have had an easier time" in getting support payments to consumers, she said.

"We've gone through disaster preparedness exercises to make sure we won't miss a beat in loading child support," Stephen said. "Especially in a disaster, they need to access funds."

Michigan piloted three counties with the program in November 2005, and began the official rollout in January 2006. Stephen said the state hopes to have all its state-disbursed child support payments in electronic transfer of funds by this month.

"The gradual nature of the rollout is important to allow us to focus on each county to make sure we provide good customer service to customers who may not have read the mailings or be familiar with the process," she said.

The response to the debit cards has been good, Stephen said.

"I think electronic transition of money is the wave of the future," she said.

Weiner said in the past basically there have been two card products—credit cards and debit cards.

"Prepaid is the third leg of that stool," he said. "The credit card is there as a lending vehicle issued by banks to their consumers. Debit cards are issued from banks to consumers.

"The distribution of prepaid cards is different. Third party companies are distributing these cards even though the bank has to be the issuer of these cards."

These range from manufacturers, who are increasingly issuing rebates on prepaid debit cards, to organizations like the American Red Cross, which issues cards for disaster relief, such as with Hurricane Katrina victims. Now states are joining the movement.

Here's how they work: Cards are issued to the consumer. When

a child support payment is made to the state disbursement center, the money is automatically loaded onto the card for consumer use. The banks issuing the cards often will give monthly statements to cardholders so they can track spending.

"The cards function at the point of sale or can operate at an ATM machine," said Williams. "You can't spend any more than you have available, but it looks and feels and acts like a credit card."

The cards in most states allow one or two free transactions at banks, so the consumer can get cash off the card if they choose. Williams said most people use their PIN to get cash back with purchases.

"When someone first gets their charge, they go to ATMs a great deal," he said. "Over the next four to six months, they go to the ATM much less. They don't want all that cash on them at one time. They begin to start banking on their card program."

Weiner believes states' use of the industry is in its early stages. "The next few years are going to see substantial growth," he said.

That's one reason government is a big part of the Prepaid Card Expo, set for Feb. 26–28 in Las Vegas.

Weiner, whose organization sponsors the expo, said the government portion will highlight the state and federal government programs that use prepaid media for disbursements. (For more information on the Prepaid Card Expo, visit www.prepaidcard-expo.com)

He said the discussions will include case studies of states that have implemented programs, their successes and things that could have been done differently.

Prepaid debit cards can benefit states in several ways, according to Williams. In addition to the state disbursed child support payments—only South Carolina does not have a consolidated child support disbursement unit, according to Williams—states are using the prepaid debit cards for things like unemployment benefits, entitlement programs, prison release funds and tax refunds. States, like many businesses, may also consider using the prepaid debit cards for health savings accounts, he said.

Michigan, for instance, also uses prepaid debit cards for its aid to needy families program.

New technology will allow states to enhance programs in the future.

"We have a statewide voice response system that a customer can check a balance," said Stephen. "They also receive in the mail an account sheet every month. They can keep track of it on a month by month basis as well.

"Lots of other states have converted to debit cards. Some of those cards are putting in place a system to alert the customer when money is loaded, through text, phone call, e-mail," she said. "That piece of alerting the customer when money is loaded is the next big thing for us."

She stressed that the change in child support payments is a national trend. Cost, convenience and efficiency are among the reasons for the trend.

"Being able to work more efficiently is something we always strive for," Rolfe said. "We know that sending out child support this way is a more efficient way to operate."

—Mary Branham Dusenberry is the managing editor for *State News*.



Muskegon Chronicle

Teens sentenced for roles in golf course vandalism

Wednesday, January 03, 2007

FROM LOCAL REPORTS

All Muskegon Township teens charged in August vandalism at University Park Golf Course have been sentenced.

Last month, 14th Circuit Judge William C. Marietti ordered 18-year-old Michael James Hewitt of 1559 S. Sheridan to serve 90 days in jail, spend five years on probation and pay \$30,098 in restitution, fines and costs. Hewitt pleaded guilty to breaking and entering a building.

Earlier, three younger teens got Juvenile Court terms of probation and referrals to the county's Balanced and Restorative Justice program, which brings victims and offenders together to agree on amends.

David Hewitt, 14, was placed on probation until further court order, required to perform community service and participate in BARJ, for breaking and entering a building, malicious destruction of property between \$1,000 and \$20,000 and turfing.

Kyle Morrow, 13, got the same sentence for breaking and entering a building, malicious destruction of property between \$1,000 and \$20,000 and possession of burglar's tools.

Cory Roberts, 15, was placed on probation for six months, ordered to perform community service, participate in BARJ and pay restitution of \$33,936, for breaking and entering a building, malicious destruction of property between \$1,000 and \$20,000 and turfing.

The teens were charged in an Aug. 16 break-in and vandalism at the golf course, 2100 Marquette. The course is owned by Muskegon Community College.

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Woman charged with attempted murder

Police say she shot her fiance in the head

Daily Tribune Staff Writer

OAK PARK -- A woman police say shot her fiance in the head is jailed in lieu of \$200,000 bond on a charge of attempted murder.

Raquel Griggs, 28, of Oak Park was arraigned Saturday in Oak Park 45B District Court. She also faces a charge of possessing a firearm in the commission of a felony, a two-year felony. Attempted murder is punishable by up to life in prison.

Griggs and her fiance, an Oak Park man in his late 20s, argued at her house on Friday, Oak Park police say. They started arguing inside the house on Northfield near Republic about 3 a.m. after the man called a taxi cab for a ride.

"The relationship wasn't going too well," said Oak Park Lt. Mike Pousak. "It was one of those heated, emotionally charged domestic situations."

The taxi arrived and was in the driveway when the couple began arguing outside after one of them produced a handgun, police said. They struggled over the gun and the woman shot her fiance, the bullet grazing his head, police said.

"He was, technically, very lucky," said Pousak, adding that the man then jumped in the waiting taxi and asked the cabbie to take him to the nearest hospital.

The cabbie, unfamiliar with the area, ended up at a Sunoco gas station, 23701 Woodward, in Pleasant Ridge and called 9-1-1 for help.

Ferndale firefighters took the man to an area hospital where he received several stitches for the wound and was later released, police said.

Griggs is scheduled for a pre-exam conference in Oak Park District Court at 1 p.m. Tuesday.

Contact Michael P. McConnell at mike.mcconnell@dailytribune.com or at (248)591-2571.

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http://www.dailytribune.com/stories/010407/loc_charged001.shtml



Mom to undergo psych testing

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, January 04, 2007

By Paul Janczewski

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FLINT - A mother charged with abusing her 43-pound disabled daughter faces psychological testing to determine if she is competent for trial and can be held criminally responsible for her actions.

Theresa E. Terrell, 43, of Flint will be examined at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry near Ann Arbor after her attorney said she was under psychiatric care in the past.

Neil C. Szabo, who represents Terrell, said during a court hearing Wednesday that his client saw a psychiatrist in Ohio because of the death of her daughter's twin brother in 1984.

Terrell is charged with second-degree abuse of a vulnerable adult, a 4-year felony. The charges came after Flint police said they found the disabled woman, 22, on a mattress stained with urine and feces in her mother's home on N. Grand Traverse near W. First Avenue on Dec. 14. Officials said the woman was clothed in four soiled diapers and a T-shirt.

Officials believe she had been lying there for weeks and had not seen a doctor in about a year.

Szabo earlier said the daughter suffers from cerebral palsy, a neurological disorder that surfaces in infancy or early childhood and permanently affects body movement and muscle coordination, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

The woman was removed from her mother's home and hospitalized.

The state Department of Human Services is trying to find an adult foster care home for the woman, who requires constant personal care.

Szabo and assistant

Genesee County Prosecutor Gladys Christopherson said Terrell told police she saw a psychiatrist in Ohio after her daughter and son were born prematurely on March 21, 1984. She reportedly told police the boy died six days after birth.

Christopherson

also said she may

try to increase Terrell's charge to first-degree abuse of a vulnerable adult, a 15-year felony, if evidence can be established at a future preliminary examination.

Flint District Judge Ramona M. Roberts scheduled a Feb. 23 pretrial for Terrell, who is being held in the Genesee County Jail on a \$25,000 cash bond.



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Migrant worker camps mostly owned by farmers

By KEVIN WALKER
Michigan Correspondent

LANSING, Mich. — A recent study indicated that there were more than 90,000 migrant workers in Michigan.

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) has released its first comprehensive estimate of the state's migrant and seasonal farm workers (MSFWs) and their families in more than 15 years.

Alice Larson, PhD. of Larson Assistance Services was contracted by the DHS to conduct the study. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provided \$30,000 in funding. Larson is the author of a series of reports published in 2000 on migrant populations in other states, and the Michigan study is part of that series.

According to Larson a migrant is simply a seasonal worker who has to live somewhere else other than home for at least one night. Migrants have to have their permanent homes at least 50 miles from their work, and they often live in other states, such as Texas.

Many of these workers live in migrant camps in the state. There are 900 such licensed camps in Michigan, and most are farmer owned and operated.

These camps can house up to 20,000 individuals, in all. It's unclear where the rest of the migrant workers live during the season.

The study provided the following totals for Michigan:

- Total MSFW and non-farm workers in their households - 90,716
- Migrant farm workers only - 35,148
- Seasonal farm workers only - 10,652
- Non-farm workers in migrant worker households - 33,671
- Non-farm workers in seasonal worker households - 11,245

The actual totals are higher, however, because workers in some agricultural businesses were left out of the study. For example, poultry and aquaculture workers were not included.

The study is considered to be important because the numbers will be used to apply for federal dollars that would help meet housing and other needs of these agricultural workers.

"We had to do this comprehensive study," said Martha Gonzalez-Cortes, DHS director of the Office of Migrant Affairs. "All of us stand to benefit from better data."

She said most migrant and seasonal worker benefits are funded by the federal government, and that these benefits might have been cut off if the state had not produced more comprehensive and current data.

"This is a very conservative report," Gonzalez-Cortes said.

She explained local experts often stated the numbers seemed rather low compared to their own experience. Larson said, compared to other states she has studied, Michigan has a large number of "accompanied" individuals, which implies children, non-farm worker spouses and parents.

According to Gonzalez-Cortes, the MSFW and family member numbers are "fairly consistent" with studies done in 1985 and 1990. She is surprised, however, by the large number of families accompanying migrant workers. She expected to see an increase in single men working in this field, since that's been the pattern in other states.

The study also provides a breakdown of MSFWs and their families by county.

The five counties with the highest numbers are as follows:

- Ottawa 11,942

- Oceana 9,657

- Van Buren 7,720

- Berrien 6,654

- Kent 6,496

A number of other counties had more than 1,000 MSFWs and family members, most of them in western Michigan. Perhaps surprisingly, Macomb County, a suburb north of Detroit, had 2,611 of these individuals.

Gonzalez-Cortes noted Macomb County has a large number of nursery operations that employ seasonal and migrant workers.

The study, which was conducted with limited funding, has certain limitations: namely, it relies on existing data sources rather than primary information, such as surveys or actual counts.

These sources include the National Agricultural Workers Survey, conducted three times a year by the U.S. Department of Labor; the Census of Agriculture, a direct survey of agricultural workers conducted once every five years by the USDA; and the ES202, a database that's derived from information submitted by employers for the national unemployment insurance system.

Larson compared her figures with those from smaller studies already published to make sure they were "reasonable," and sought feedback from local individuals with extensive knowledge of the subject.

According to Gonzalez-Cortes, this study is especially useful because of the county statistics, since most funds are distributed according to needs at the county level. Gonzalez-Cortes and her colleagues will now be able to cite county numbers when requesting funds for a certain area.

To view the entire 36-page study, including all county statistics, go online at www.michigan.gov/dhs

12/20/2006